

Seasonable
THOUGHTS
Of Divine
PROVIDENCE

Affording
Comfort to those who
are in Danger.

Instruction to all that are
delivered from the late sad
VISITATION.

Wherein we are inform'd
Whether our Preservation be
a fruit of Gods Special
Love, or of his Common
Providence.

London, Printed for Tho. Parkhurst
at the three Crowns, at the lower
end of Cheap, over against
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1568/1364

PHOENIX

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London, Printed for Tho. Parkhurst,

at the Green-Church, in the Strand,

and of Robert Overton,

at the Crown, in St. Dunstons,

B L

For the Honourable, my
very good FRIENDS, Sir
ROBERT HANSON Sheriff
and ALEXANDER HOLT
Esquire, Alderman of the
City of LONDON.

THE common danger of
the approaching and
spreading Pestilence,
(which was sufficient
to awaken every heart) made
some impressions upon me; but
especially the number of youth in
my Family, did stir up a quicker
sence both of danger and duty, to
discharge the trust reposed in me,
in caring for their preservation,
as mine own.

The Epistle

Amongst all the Remedies I could think of, I found none so efficacious to quiet my heart from the fear of evil, as Meditation, and reliance upon Divine Providence: And the experience that I have had heretofore, That awakening Judgements do make way for Counsel, hath induced me to make these Thoughts publick, hoping that what hath been useful to me, may be profitable to others.

In this endeavour, I could not pass you by without special observation and respect. A great part of the mercy vouchsafed to my Family, being yours, having four Sons preserved in it: Besides your Interest in the famous City of LONDON, for whom

Dedicatory.

whom this is chiefly published, of which you have the Honour, not onely to be Members, but Magistrates; where, by your residence in this time of its Visitation, you have had advantages above many, to furnish your selves with instances of Gods Providence towards the City, your own and other Families, which have been wonderfully preserved in the Valley of the shadow of Death. To which I may add your interest in me, by which you may entitle your selves to what ever I may be serviceable to your selves or Families in.

Now that in the perusal of this, you may find, that your lives, and the lives of your Relations, were given to you in mercy, and that

The Epistle, &c.

the City, in the midst of which
you have been preserved, may ex-
perience, That you have been kept
alive to be blessings to it, shall be
the Prayer of

Your affectionate

Enfield, Jan.

25 1665. Your Servant in the

L O R D,

Jo. Chishull.

Season-



Seasonable Thoughts

Divine Providence.

DEUT. 33. 29.

*Happy art thou, O Israel; Who
is like unto thee, O people, ser-
ved by the Lord.*

Moses the Servant of the
Lord, Having finished
his course, and condu-
cted Israel out of E-
gypt, and led them
through the red Sea, and the Wil-
derness, being not permitted to go
into Canaan, (though he seriously
begged it of God) receives the sen-
tence.

rence of Death, with particular com-
 mand to go up into Mount *Nebo*, and
 dye: Though he struggled a little in
 this, and would fain have gotten a
 Dispensation to go over into *Canaan*;
 yet perceiving that God had other-
 wise determined concerning him, he
 lets fall his suit, and he chearfully
 sets himself to obey the Command
 of God, when he had first taken care
 for his Successor, and prayed for, and
 blest his people. In this Chapter we
 have *Moses* his farwel; he takes
 leave of *Israel*, as Christ did of his
 Disciples; his last words are as full
 of Love and Consolation as possibly
 they could be. He deals out a blef-
 sing to every Tribe in particular, and
 then blesses them in the whole lump,
 and not only them, but all the people
 of God. And being lifted up in his
 spirit, he hath a far better prospect
 than he had of *Canaan* upon Mount
Nebo: he takes a view of what God
 had done, and of what he had promi-

sed
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sed to do for them; and he breaks out in consideration of this, into a serious admiration at their happy estate, in these words, *Happy art thou, O Israel; who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?* In which we have,

First, Moses his judgement concerning Israel's state, Happy art thou O Israel.

Secondly, The confirmation of this, in which he notes the eminency and singularity of their happiness, who is like to thee? (i. e.) there is none like to thee: Thy Priviledge and Blessing is remarkable; because thou enjoyest it alone; none can boast of it but thy self.

Thirdly, He explains this his assertion, and shews wherein the happiness of God's Israel lies, in these words, Saved of the Lord.

The Reason why *Moses* pronounces them happy, is, Because God hath such a special care of them, to keep

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keep them and save them in all times of trouble and danger.

The words might be broken into many Propositions, but they may be best taken in this one Proposition.

Doct. Gods peculiar Care and Providence toward his people, is their peculiar happiness. Or, It is the happiness of the people of God alone, that they are under the special Care and Providence of God; he hath a peculiar regard to them; they are the saved of the Lord, for whose safety he provides above all others; and in comparison of whom, he cares for none in the world besides.

To make this Proposition clear, I am to prove,

First, That God hath a people of whom he hath a special Care.

Secondly, The people who are the subjects of this peculiar Care and Providence, are happy above all others.

But

But I know if I prove the former, the latter will be granted; all men agreeing in this, That Preservation and Safety, in time of private or publick dangers, is a great happiness; and I think all men that have not given up themselves to gross *Atheism*, will agree, That the best Security that a man can have against all kind of Evils, is an Interest in Divine Providence.

I shall therefore endeavour to shew you, That God hath a peculiar Care of his People in all conditions; to save them from the many evils that they are compassed about withall; this being the only thing that needs any proof. In prosecution of this,

I shall shew you

First, Some Instances of this Care and Providence, both in reference to the Church in general, and to particular persons.

Secondly, How this is express'd in what terms the Holy Ghost uses to

communicate the notions of it to us, that our conceptions of it may be regulated.

Thirdly, Wherein this Care for the safety of God's people, is express; how it appears in its particulars, and is proved by actions as well as words.

Fourthly, Some Reasons for this, That though this be far above what we can rationally expect, considering our unworthiness; yet there is nothing built more reasonably upon Scripture Suppositions.

Fifthly, The improvement that may be made of this Truth.

First, Then, for the instances which may be given of this Truth: We may see it in the Care that he takes of his whole Church, when it was confined to the people of *Israel*.

What Care did God take of them in *Egypt*, when they were near to ruin? *Pharaoh* and his people had

consulted and determined their destruction. But what sayes God? *Exo. 3. 7: I have seen their affliction, and heard their cry, and know their sorrow.* It is a great evidence of his Care, that he observed and weighed their sufferings.

Secondly, When he begins to work for their deliverance, and stretches out his hand to bring his sore Judgments upon their Oppressors, he does not send his Judgments upon the whole Land promiscuously, but he separates betwixt the *Egyptians* and the *Israelites*.

Thirdly, When *Pharaoh* begins so far to yeild, as to admit of a Treaty, never did any stand stricter upon terms, than he; he would abate nothing of his demand; never was the Interest of any people better defended, or more carefully provided for, than theirs: he would not leave a hoof behind, *Exod. 10. 26.* he would make no composition with
Bha

*Pharaoh, all Israel, and all that was
Israel, must be delivered.*

Fourthly, When he had brought them thence, and they were come out, according to his demands, what care did he take of their preservation at the Red Sea, when they were compassed in on every side, the Sea before, the Mountains on both sides, and the *Egyptians* behind them; yet he led them through the Sea, as on dry Land; and as he left none behind in *Egypt*, so he lost none here.

Fifthly, When they were in the Wilderness, what care does he take to lead them in their way, by a Cloud and Pillar of Fire; and to provide for them in that desolate place, so that they had not only bread and water, food and raiment; but, as the *Psalmist* says, They had Angels food.

Sixthly, View them in the Land of *Canaan*, and you shall find wonders of Providence, in their preservation

vation from dangers , and deliverance out of them , when they had brought themselves in trouble by their provocations

Seventhly , God had assured them of his Providential Care of them , while they walked in his Commands ; nay , he had given them one special Command , which they could not observe without a very great dependance upon his Providence. He had commanded all the Males from all parts to appear before him thrice every year. Now this must needs be dangerous , and against all the Rules of policy , if they had not had a security in Divine Providence : It might seem a very inconsiderate thing to go up , and leave all their Countrey naked , their Wives and Children to defend themselves in the midst of Enemies , who must needs know the times of their going up to *Jerusalem*. But God undertook to guard their Countrey in the meantime

time, and he kept the enemy not only from invading, but also from despoiling it, Exod. 34. 24.

Eightly, Lastly, View them in their Captivity, when they had provoked the Lord to give them up into the hands of their Enemies; yet the Lord hath a special care of them, to preserve them under the evils which he brought upon them for their sins; we may see this evidently, *Isa. 42. 24, 25.* and *Isa. 43. 1, 2.* who gave Jacob to the spoil, and Israel to the Robbers? Did not the Lord, he against whom they have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways; neither were they obedient to his Law; therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battel, and he hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart. But now, thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel; fear not, for I have

have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy Name, thou art mine, when thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.

If ever God would leave his people in time of trouble, it would be in such a case as this when they were under the trouble which he had brought upon them, and that for their sin; yea, when they behaved themselves very ill under the hand of God which was upon them: *Israel* had so provoked the Lord, that he could not spare them; yet in their afflictions he could not forsake them. *vv* He would go with them thorow fire and water. *VVe* have very remarkable passages of Gods Providence to that people in their Captivity, to preserve them from being cut off; we may read it at large in the Book of

of *Hester*; when mischief was intended against them, and they were designed for ruine, then must *Hester*, by a strange Providence, be brought to the Crown, and *Mordecai* as strangely and as seasonably prefer'd to Honour. For though he had done the King Service before by discovering the Plot, which was laid against him; yet the King takes no notice of this till such time as the *Jews* were in extreame danger to be cut off; and *Haman* must be used to help to raise *Mordecai* to Honour, who had designed not only his, but the ruine of all the *Jews*.

Thus you see the Providence of God cures the Church in general. Will you see it towards particular persons? Consider it then in these few, for instances, of many that might be given, without number.

What provision did God make for *Noah*, and the safety of him and his Family, because he was righteous in

in that generation, *Gen. 6. 14.* Therefore God directs him to make an Ark that he might escape that common destruction. After he had made the Ark by Gods direction, God takes care to call him into the same when the time was come, that the encrease of the waters might not prevent him, *Gen. 7. 1.* V When he had call'd him in, he is careful to shut him in, to secure him from the waters, *Gen. 7. 16.* God would hereby express the great care that he had of *Noah*, that he would not trust to his care in making every place fast where the water might come in to annoy him; he might for want of skill, being not acquainted with such a Vessel formerly, or for want of sufficient care, not knowing what danger he should be in, nor yet understanding the force of the waters, have left open some cranny, at least, whereat the water might have broken in upon him. God therefore would shut every

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ry door himself, and by a secret power he did also fortifie the several parts of the Ark against the force of the waters.

VWhen God was about to destroy *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah* by fire, See what care he takes of *Lot*, because he had a righteous Soul that was vexed with the filthy conversation of the *Sodomites*, *Gen. 19.* where we see, first, God sends his Angels to call him out, and to bring out all that he had in it, *v. 12.* VWhen the danger is eminent, and the time draws nigh to destroy the City, they hasten him, *v. 15.* when language will not do it, they pluck him out of his own house, and out of the City, and the destruction of it, *v. 16.* nay, that he may not perish out of the City, they grant him a City to flye unto. God shut *Noah* into the Ark to keep danger from him, and he pulls *Lot* out, to keep him from the danger.

Read

Read but the stories of *Abraham*, *Jacob*, *Elijah* and *David*, in their Pilgrimage, and you cannot but acknowledg a special providence of God attending them in all conditions. VVhen *Abraham* was in danger, and the weakness of his faith appeared in it, how does God take care to bring him off with safety and honour! He afflicts *Abimelech's* Family, and then acquaints him with the reason of it, *Gen. 20. 2.*

See his care of *Jacob* when he fled from his Brother *Esau*; he provides for him, first, in his Uncles house; and when the time is come, the same Providence which brought him thither, and kept him there, must make way for his Return, to bring him off safely; for his place of entertainment, was become his Prison; his Wealth too great a Booty to let go; but God meets *Laban*, *Gen. 31. 24.* before he overtakes *Jacob*, and prevents him from doing the injury he intended.

After

After he had escaped the hands of *Laban*, he must fall into the hands of *Esau*, who had long since threatned his death, and hath now the opportunity that he had looked for to cut him off; yet God turns his heart, and makes him kind to *Jacob*; so that he might well say, *Gen.* 33. 4. I have seen thy face, as if I had seen the face of God; for he might see Gods face in his. It was God that made *Esau* kind to *Jacob*; it was a reconciled God, that made a reconciled Brother.

Consider but the care that God takes of *Elijah*, when he was distressed by Famine on the one hand, and the persecution of *Jezabel* on the other. He feeds him by an Angel, by the Ravens, and by the Widow of *Sareptah*. We must needs confess him to be a great instance of Gods Providence.

The like we have in *David*, whom *Saul* had appointed to death; how

did he persecute him, and hunt him
 like a Partridge on the Mountains;
 yet God raises up some to save him:
 One while his Wife deceives her
 Father, when he would have slain
 him in his bed. Another while *Jo-*
nothan is of his Council, and gives
 him intelligence when danger is near
 him, and he was fain to flye to save
 himself, and is closely pursued in the
 Wilderness, and in great danger to
 be taken; he is preserved by an In-
 vasion made upon the Land by the
Philistines, 1 Sam. 23. 26, 27. And
David made hast to get away for
 fear of *Saul*, for *Saul* and his men
 compassed *David* and his men round
 about to take them. But there came
 a Messenger unto *Saul*, saying, *Hast*
thee, and come forth. Philistines
have invaded the Land. Wherefore
Saul returned from pursuing after
David. *Saul* never came out with
 greater resolution, with better prepa-
 ration, than now: He was resolved
 yet

to make a search for him through the whole Land, and to find him where ever he should conceal himself, *ver. 23.* *If he be in the Land, sayes he, I will search him out, thorough out all the thousands of Judah.* For preparation, he had correspondence with the *Ziphites*, who knew those parts where *David* was, and had instruction to search out every lurking place of his; and for strength, he had men enough to inclose *David* and all his men in the Wilderness. *Saul* in all this confidence, is notwithstanding disappointed; God had otherwise provided to secure *David*, and divert *Saul* by a way that neither thought of. These may serve for instances of this Truth: A farther proof of it may be,

Secondly, By considering the expressions by which this Providence of God is set forth in Scripture; and they are such as note a very tender and special care of them, and they

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they are chiefly these three.

1. Keeping or covering them under his wings.

Deut. 32. 11, 12. As an Eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings; so the Lord alone did lead them.

The Providence of God, which is sometimes compared to the Hens gathering of her Chickens under her wings, is here set forth by the Eagles care of her young ones, which is the noblest, the wisest, and strongest of Birds, and for tenderness to hers, falls short of none. She doth not onely keep them in the Nest, but she carries them also with her from the Nest, and that, not with her Talons, as she does her prey, lest she should hurt them; but, on her wings. *David* praying for help in time of his trouble, uses this expression, *Psal.* 17. 8, 9. *Hide me under the shadow of thy wings,*

wings, from the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about. David knew well enough, That under this shadow he should be secret and safe from his enemies, how many or how strong soever: And the security of such a person he does elsewhere strongly assert, especially against that Evil which no other strength or skill can protect us from, I mean the destroying Pestilence, see *Psalm*. 91. in ver. 1, 4. he alludes to this expression, and in the following verses he shews the fruit of this, in a freedom both from the fear of the Judgment, and of the Judgment it self. V. 1. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* V. 4. *He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.* But what advantage shall this be to him? See in the following verses, v. 5, 6. *He shall not be afraid of the terror*

by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the Pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the Destruction that wasteth at noon-day.

Now though this be not an absolute promise of freeing every godly person from this noisom disease, yet it is a ground for their hope; the people of God may take hold of this promise, and plead it with God for their preservation; and if they be found in their duties, acting faith upon God, there is very much spoken in these words for their security; For God hath given his Angels charge over them, to keep them in all their ways, especially if we make the Most High our Habitation. If we would have the benefit of Divine Protection, we must be sure to put our selves under it, by a particular act of Faith.

2. A second expression by which this Providence is express, is his hiding his people in time of danger,

Psal 27. 5. In the time of trouble he
 shall hide me in his pavillion; in the
 secret of his Tabernacle shall he hide
 me: And Psal. 31. 20. Thou shalt
 hide me in the secret of thy presence,
 from the pride of men, thou shalt keep
 them secretly in a pavillion from the
 strife of tongues. This is another
 way by which we express the care we
 take for those we love, when we fear
 to be overpowered or oppressed, we
 hide that which we would keep;
 where we suspect our strength to pro-
 tect what we desire to preserve, we
 make up that defect by care and
 skill. Thus *Rahab* hid the Spies,
 whom she could not protect from
 the fury of the King of *Jericho*.
 And *Obadiab* had no other way to
 protect the Prophets from *Jezabel's*
 fury, and the raging Famine, but to
 hide them by fifties in Caves. Now
 the Lord uses this way of expressing
 his care for his people, not because
 there is any defect in him of power
 to

to defend and secure them against all the force and opposition of men, for he can defend them from all their enemies, as he did *Elijah* on the top of the Mountain, from the Captains of *Abaziah*, and their fifties. But the Lord uses this to shew us, That his care for his, is no way short of our care for ours; what course we take to preserve any thing dear to us, that doth God take for the security of his; his Wisdom as well as his Power, is seen in saving them in time of danger.

Deut. 32. A third expression of his Care is, Keeping them as the Apple of the Eye. God's Care of *Israel* is exprest thus, *Deut. 32. 10. He found him in a desert Land, and in the wast howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.* Now we know that no part of mans body is kept with more care and tenderness than the eye, not only because it is of so much

use, and so great an ornament to the body, but also because it is so sensible of the least touch, and is offended with that which other parts feel not; therefore sayes God, Zach. 2. 8. *He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye.* As the Eye, so God is not only sensible of blows, but of touches; not only great, but small injuries done to the people of God, do affect him; and as men keep out dust or hairs out of the eye, so does the Lord keep off all Evils from his people; therefore says he, Psal. 105. 15. *Touch not mine anointed, and do my Prophets no harm.* Therefore David calling upon Divine Providence, bespeaks it in these words, Psal. 17. 8. *Keep me as the apple of the eye.* Lay these three expressions together, and tell what can be possibly added to express the tender care and watchfulness of Divine Providence over the people of God; *He that believes this to be true, can say*

say nothing less than *Moses* does here, *Who is like to thee, oh Israel, a people saved by the Lord?* Thus I have shewn you how this Divine care is express in Scripture-Language; the next thing is, To shew wherein this is express in deed, and matter of fact: Which is

Thirdly, The Third Particular; Wherein does God express his Care of his People? His Actions as well as his Word speak it out plain, if we consider,

1. He hath a special Care of them when he sends his Judgments abroad into the World; and this Care alwayes precedes the Judgment; he consults and provides always for their safety, before he sends his Judgments forth. As we see in *Noah*, provision is made for his safety before the World is drowned; And *Lot* must be pluckt out of *Sodom* before it is burnt. And the Mourners in *Jerusalem* must be marked, before the de-

Destroying Angels are sent out, *Ex. 9.*
4, 5.

And the four Angels must not go forth to hurt the Earth, till the servants of God are sealed, *Rev. 7. 2, 3.*

Now the Care that God takes of his people in time of publick Judgments, respects either their bodies or souls.

His care of their persons is sometimes to preserve them from those Evils which are coming upon the World. Thus he kept *Noah* and *Lot*, and the Mourners in *Jerusalem*; the Angels had a charge not to come nigh them. Or,

2dly, If he suffer any of those Judgments to reach them, yet he supports them under them. Thus when God brought a Famine upon the Land of *Canaan*, he provided bread for *Jacob* in *Egypt*; and when it fell upon *Israel* in *Ahabs* time, the Lord provided for *Elijah* and the Prophets, that they were kept alive. And his

this was one great act of God's Providence, to keep *Israel* alive so many years in a Wilderness, of which *Moses* speaking in this Chapter, sayes, v. 27. *The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are everlasting Arms.* God's Care is as much seen in keeping his people under trouble; as in keeping them from trouble.

Secondly, God's Care of his People under Publick Evils; respects their souls; and that also appears in two particulars.

1. He hath a great Care of the Comforts of his People; he provides for These, as well as for their Lives and Eternal Estates; he would not have their Spirits sink under any trouble that befalls them. Therefore it is observable, when God was about to send Judgments upon the earth, especially such as may seem to reach all, good and bad; he did use to give some warning before hand, and he first denounc't these Judgments to

Awaken the wicked; now lest the
 godly should be discouraged by these,
 he did usually interweave those
 Threatnings with some of the sweet-
 est Promises: For instance, read o-
 ver these few, instead of many, *Jer.*
30. 12, 17. Ezek. 14. 22. & 16. 60.
Mos. 1. 10. & 2. 14. Nah. 1. 2, 3, 4.
5, 6, 7. Hab. 3. 5—13. In all which
 God is represented very terrible in
 his Judgments, so that it may be said
 of the House of *Israel*, as of *Elie's*
House, *The ears of him that heareth*
such things, must needs tingle. Yet
 you shall not find sweeter Promises
 in all the Book of God, than in these
 places where he hath so bitterly de-
 nounced his Judgments. This must
 needs be in favour of his people,
 whose hearts he would not have made
 sad. And it is remarkable, when
 the Prophet *Nahum* had made such
 a terrible description of God in his
 Power and Wrath, in the first six
 verses, which might make the heart
 of

of a *Moses* to shake, or an *Elijah* to cover himself with his *Mantle*; he adds ver. 7. *The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him.*

Neither is that forementioned of *Habbakuk* less observable, who having given the like dreadful account of God's coming forth to execute Judgment, in which he says, *Hab. 3. 5. Before him went the Pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet*: Lest his people should fear and flye from him also, he adds, ver. 13. *Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people*; And because this might seem incredible, that God should go forth in such a way as this, to save his people; nothing could be expected but death from such a Providence; he therefore doubles the expression, *Even for salvation with thine Anointed*: As if he would bespeak the comfort of his people in this, *Whatever you see doing in the World, or*
how

how terrible soever God appears in the way of his Judgments, yet be not you discouraged, for he intends no hurt to you in all this, in the latter end; but rather lift up your heads, because the day of your Redemption draws nigh.

2. As he hath a Care of them, to comfort them against the coming of a Judgment; so when he hath brought it, and it reaches them, he takes care to sanctifie it to them: What ever they sustain or suffer in their Bodies, Names or Estates, it is made up in the communication of the Divine Nature, and the encrease of Grace, that is made by these things.

The Author to the *Hebrews* tells us plainly, That the End of God in afflicting his people, is their profit, *Heb. 12. 10.* But what profit is it that comes by these? He tells us, it is the partaking of his Holinesse. When we are made partakers of the
Life

Life of God, we are gainers, though we should lose our own lives in the inquest of it. Therefore the Apostle counsels the Saints to rejoyce in their afflictions, *Jam. 1. 2, 3. My Brethren, count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations, knowing this, That the trial of your Faith worketh patience.* Never be sad for what you suffer, for if you get nothing but patience, you will be gainers by all your sufferings. Now Faith and Patience are as much tryed and improved by what we suffer from God, as what we suffer from men. And though it be hard upon this account to rejoyce under afflictions, yet the people of God do often rejoyce after them, for the good they have received by them; as *David, Psal. 119. 71. It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes:* For he had said before, v. 67. *Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.* Thus
you

you see the Providence of God appears towards his people, either in keeping them from the evils which fall upon others, or the sanctifying them to them, and turning them into good.

Secondly, He hath a special Care of his people to preserve them from those Evils which their Enemies intend and design against them, whether it be the Devil or wicked men.

1. God hath so great a care of his people, that the Devil (their adversary) who goeth about like a roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour, yet cannot touch them without leave of God; as we see in the case of *Job* 1.10. The Devil acknowledges that *Job* was so well defended by the Hedge that God had made about him, that there was no touching of him; there was no gap in that Hedge, and it was too high and strong to break over it; God must open a door, and let him in, or he could do nothing to *Job*.

2. His

2. His Providence appears greatly in preserving them in the World, in the midst of their Enemies, the Sons of *Belial*, and that several ways.

1. He sometimes restrains their Enemies, and over-rules their Counsels, that they cannot speedily resolve upon, or effectually execute what they design. Thus he withheld *Balaam* from cursing *Israel*, and restrained *Laban* from hurting *Jacob*.

2dly, He stirs up secret friends to favour and to shelter his people when danger is near them. Thus he raised up *Obadiah* in *Ahab's* Court, to favour the Prophets of the Lord, and to hide and feed them in the persecution of *Jezabel*, and the sore Famine that was upon the Land.

3dly, He sometimes converts their Enemies, and makes use of those to build the Church, who had before destroyed it: Thus he did by *Paul*, who breathed out threatnings against the Church of God.

4thly, He sometimes changes their minds, though he convert them not; as he dealt by *Esau*, whom the Lord made kind to his Brother *Jacob*, though he continued the same man he was.

5thly, God sometimes takes them out of the way, as he did *Herod*, *Matt. 1. 20.* who sought after Christ in his Infancy, to cut him off. Thus the Lord preserves his people from the evils which might fall on them from men.

Thirdly, His Providence is seen in keeping them from those evils which they are prone to run themselves into through ignorance or inadvertency. God preserves his people from many secret and unseen dangers, which they are not sensible of, such as they did not foresee, and therefore could not prevent. He hath given his Angels charge concerning them, to keep them in all their ways, who shall bear them in their hands, lest they should

should dash their feet against a stone, *Psal.* 91. 11, 12. They have a charge from God to watch over his people, and they are faithful and affectionate to preserve them from those evils which they observe not, and are prone to overlook.

Fourthly, God's Providence appears toward his people in this, That when he sends any Judgment upon the Earth, that is to be executed by an unseen hand, he will not trust it in the hands of the Evil Angels, but employs the Good Angels, who are Friends and Guardians to his people, and of the Family with them of the first-born. This we see in the case of *Sodom and Gomorrah*, he sends the Angels about this Work, who might secure *Lot* in the destruction of it, *Gen.* 19. 1. And when the great Plague was sent upon *Israel*, which destroyed Seventy Thousand men in three days, *2 Sam.* 24. 15. it was executed by a good Angel. Doubtless the

the Devil would have been glad of such an Employment, but God would not for his peoples sakes trust him with any such power.

Fifthly, God's Care for his people is so great, that it is without any intermission; *Psal. 121. 3, 4. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber: Behold, he that keepeth Israel, shall neither slumber nor sleep.* God's Care of his people is a constant, uninterrupted Care, it leaves no door open for the vigilant Enemy. *Saul* thought himself safe when he slept amongst his Captains and Souldiers, who had a special charge to watch for their Kings Life; but while his numerous Guard were all asleep, *David* went out into his camp, and took away *Saul's* Spear, which was at his Bolster, and with it might have taken away his Life, *1 Sam. 26. 12.*

But God's Providence for his People neither sleeps nor slumbers; there-

therefore their Enemies can take no such advantage of them.

Sixthly, So great is the Lord's Care for his People, that their preservation in the world was the great thing which lay upon the heart of Christ when he was going out of the world. And we all know, that mens affections are then discovered; those whom we love, we provide for them.

John 17. 9. I pray for them, I pray not for the world, but for them that thou hast given me out of the world. ver. 15. I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil.

The whole Chapter is full of the expressions of his wonderful Love and tender Care for his People, which he uttered at that time, as he himself tells them, that they might have his Joy fulfilled in themselves, that all the people of God might know how his heart in Heaven, is affected towards them on Earth. Thus you see
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wherein God expresses his Care of his people ; next follow the Reasons that may be assigned for this, and they are,

Reas. 1. They are his Children; they stand in such a Relation to him, as engages him to be careful of them. They are born unto him by Regeneration. Now we cannot think that the God of Nature, who hath imprinted this upon every Creature, to take care of its own, will himself be found wanting in this.

The tenderness and care of men and beasts to their little ones, is all derived from him; and will not then his Love and Care much more exceed theirs? He tells us himself, that the Mother may forget the Son of her Womb, that she should not have compassion on him; but the Lord will not forget his people, *Isa. 49. 15.*

Reas. 2. They are his Jewels, of the greatest price to him, his peculiar Treasure, *Exod. 19. 5.* He sets a high-

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at price upon them, than he does upon all the world beside. This he confirms by actions, and renders as the reason of some remarkable Providences of his, *Psal. 105. 14. He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, he reprov'd Kings for their sakes.* He values their Ransome at a higher rate, for he gives whole Countries and Kingdoms for them, *Isa. 43. 3. I gave Egypt for thy ransome, Ethiopia and Seba for thee.* This is a sufficient proof of the high esteem that God hath of them; and things which we highly prize, we tenderly care for.

Reas. 3. They are his Portion, his Inheritance, all that he hath set apart for himself in the World, *Psal. 43. The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself, Deut. 32. 9. The Lords portion is his people; Jacob is the Lot of his Inheritance.* These are mighty expressions, enough to astonish us, That God who is Lord of all the World, who hath Heaven

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and Earth, and all that is therein, should, as it were, quit his Interest in all the rest, and count it inconsiderable and little worth, in comparison of a few that he hath chosen out of it, who were as bad as the rest, excepting in what they are beholding to him for, and are made better by his choice.

Reas. 4. His Honor depends upon these, they are the only people that lay his Concernments to heart, and take care of his glory; others do serve, and help forward his designs in the world, but they do it not out of design, they mind only their own things; but his people design to serve and honor him, and mind his glory as their greatest interest in the world, *Phil. i. 20, 21.* *As always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death; for to me to live is Christ, and to dye is gain.* The glory of Christ is that which a Christian aims at in life and death;

death; yea, he makes every particular action subservient to this, 1 Cor. 10. 31. *Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* Now it is no wonder if God take care for those who take care for him; if they design his glory, much more does he their preservation.

Reas. 5. Because he hath dearly purchased them, he hath bought them at a dear rate, he hath bought them at first with a great price, not of silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19. Beside this, he oftentimes makes a providential purchase of them, by giving men and people for them, *Isa.* 43. 3. Now we know, that the things which we purchase dearly, we lay up safely, and keep them carefully, because we will not lose the cost and charge we have been at. Thus God reasons from former mercies, to future preservations, *Isa.* 43. 1. *Since thou hast been precious in my*

my sight, thou hast been honourable,
and I have loved thee; therefore will I
give men for thee, and people for thy
life.

Reas. 6. He is careful of them,
because they love him; these are the
people of all the world, that love
God; therefore they are the people
that he minds above all the world; he
hath their hearts, and therefore they
have his. Psal. 91. 14. When God
had spoken of his care of his people,
and their safety from the Pestilence,
he adds this as the Reason, *Because
he hath set his love upon me, therefore
will I deliver him.*

Reas. 7. The Reason of all Rea-
sons is, He hath set his love upon
them, Psal. 146. 8. *The Lord loveth
the righteous.* John 16. 27. *The Fa-
ther himself loveth you.* Nay, so
great is the Love of God to his
people, that he is called Love,
1 John 4. 16. Now those whom we
love, we take care of; we consider

not so much their merit or demerit, if they be in danger ; but we feel in our selves what they suffer ; and we can no more forbear to prevent an evil that we see coming upon them, or labour to remove it when it is come, than we can forbear to seek out for help for our selves, if we were in the same case. God's Love makes him sympathize with his people in all their sufferings, therefore he sayes by the Prophet, *Isa. 63. 9. In all their afflictions I was afflicted with them* ; wonder not then at what follows, *the Angel of his presence saved them ; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them ; and he bare them, and carried them all the dayes of old.* Where Love is so powerful to cause such a sense of affliction, it must needs awaken our care, and stir up all our circumspection to prevent or remove the evil which fall upon us, in falling upon those we love.

Thus I have endeavoured to make this Truth clear ; yet before I improve it, I must remove some objections out of the way.

Obj. 1. How does the Care of God appear for his people ; seeing we find that they have often been made a prey to the wicked, and the Scripture gives an account of hard things that they have suffered under them ?

Ans. The Scripture which gives us account of their sufferings, tells us also of their preservation under those troubles ; so that rightly considered, they do not darken, but clear the Providence of God. How did God preserve *Israel* in *Egypt*, *Exod.* 3. 2. though the bush burned with fire, it was not consumed ? And as the Apostle says concerning himself and the Primitive Christians, *2 Cor.* 4. 9. Though they were persecuted, yet they were not forsaken.

3. God's

2. God's Care of his people appears in this, That he encreased them by their Troubles, as well as preserved them under them, *Exod. 1. 12.* the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew; and it hath been the experience of the Christian Church, *That the blood of the Martyrs hath been the Seed of the Church.*

3. His Care appears greatly in caring for their souls; he sanctifies these troubles to them, and does them a great deal of good in the trying and strengthening of their Graces, *1 Pet. 1. 7.* *The tryal of your Faith being much more precious than Gold,* *Rom. 5. 3; 4, 5.* *We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.* Nay, he does not only do them good at present, but makes way for glory, *2 Cor. 4. 17.* *Our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*

4. Though he hath often given them up into the hands of wicked men, that they might shew their malice and hatred against them; yet he never gave them up to the wills of such; he hath not left wicked men at their own liberty, to do as they pleased; but God hath reserved to himself the ordering and proportioning of their troubles, to their strength; he hath appointed what they shall suffer, for number, how many blows they shall bear; for weight, how heavy they shall be; and for time, how long they shall continue.

5. God hath always had such a Care of them, that they have never perished under their afflictions. Though they have fallen, yet they have not perished. They have laid down their lives, but they have not lost them; Their lives have not been taken away, but upon such terms as they have been willing to part with them.

them, and in which they are gainers, *Phil. 1. 21.* He that could say, *To him to live was Christ*, could also say, *to dye is gain*; therefore he comforted himself in this, That though he might lay down his life in those troubles which he underwent at *Rome*, yet he should have a considerable value for it, for Christ should be manifested in his body, whether it were by life or death.

Obj. 2. Scripture and Experience both tell us, That all things fall alike to all, Eccles. 9. 2, 3. so that love or hatred is not to be known by any thing before us.

Ans. 1. This must be understood of outward things only thus far, That wicked men have their shares in the good things of this life; and good men have their part in the evil things of it: There is no outward good, but the wicked have enjoy'd; nor

no outward trouble and affliction but hath befallen the righteous ; and as they have their shares of these , so they have but a share of them ; the good have not all the evil , nor the wicked all the good of this world ; and there is reason for this , because the wicked have their good things here , and the good have their evil things.

2. Though all things do fall alike to all , yet all things do not work alike to all. God's care is seen in ordering those things which befall his people for their good , in making those things good in the conclusion , which are evil in themselves ; whereas those things which are good in themselves , or at least reputed so among men , are for the hurt of those who enjoy them , when they fall into the hands of wicked men , *Psal. 11. 6. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares.* There is nothing that such a one enjoys , but it is a snare to him , to en-
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tangle and hold him fast till God cast him into Hell ; whereas the same things are helps to a good man to bring him to Heaven , *Rom. 8. 28.* *All things work together for good to those that love God.* So that although Good and Evil be dispensed promiscuously among good and bad, and they seem to fare all alike ; yet does God under these carry on distinct and different works of Mercy and Judgment ; of Mercy to the good for their Salvation ; and of Judgment to the wicked for their hardning : So that herein is seen the Providence of God towards his people , that he furthers their Salvation by those things which are an occasion of hardening others ; and by those Providences which are common to them and others , he carries on a special design of Grace and Mercy to them. So that there is a vast difference betwixt those things which seem to be the same. For

though the godly have all the troubles in the World which any other do meet withall, yet they have not the Wrath and Displeasure of God in them, but a secret assistance and support under them; and though the wicked have all the outward blessings that God bestows upon his own, yet they have not the Love of God in and through them, and his Blessing with them, as the godly have. ○

3. Though outward things are not sufficient to discover Love or Hatred, they alone are not proofs of one or other; yet it is unquestionably true, That the Love and Hatred of God do run thorough these things also: God orders and disposes outward things in his love to the Godly; and though sense cannot discern his Love by these, yet Faith can often see it thorow them; and the outward Providences of God speak his displeasure to the

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the wicked ; yea, he often times gives them those things in wrath, in which they blessed themselves ; and when they have both finished their races, and they shall both look back upon their lives from Eternity, they will both agree in this, That they were in nothing more unlike, than in that in which they seemed to be alike.

Obj. 3. But we see that not only the godly do partake of the same Judgements which befall the wicked, but the wicked also do share in the same mercies and preservations with the righteous ; they also are preserved in time of danger with the other, no judgement, but takes away as good as it leaves behind it ; and leaves as bad as it takes away ; where then is seen God's care of his people ?

Ans. There is a great difference betwixt the Judgments and Mercies

of the good and bad, though they seem to be the same, and to sence without difference.

For the Mercies of the godly are indeed sent in Mercy to his people; he orders one Mercy towards another, a temporal Mercy towards a spiritual one, and one Mercy is a pledg of another; so that a good man can say often times by Faith, as *Leah* did, *Gen. 30.11. Behold a troop cometh.* And as *David* reasoned from his deliverance from the Lyon and the Bear, to his deliverance from the *Philistins*; so can a good man reason from one Mercy of any kind to another; but if God give any thing to a wicked man that seems a Mercy, it is but to prevent a greater Mercy, a Temporal to prevent a Spiritual; he gives them temporal Rewards here for any service they do him, to take off their claim to any hereafter.

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How shall I know whether this be a reservation from this Judgment of Mercy, or a fruit of Confidence? Or whether it be a reservation unto evil?

You shall know three ways. By some things which go before preservation. Secondly, By signs which accompany it. By some things which fol-

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of the good and bad, though they seem to be the same, and to sence without difference.

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slain, the first was doubtless in mercy, but most Interpreters agree in this, That *Cain's* was a Judgment upon him, a trembling of his heart and head, which imply'd his guilt, and was a terror to others, as well as to himself.

Here then may arise a great and weighty Question worthy of the serious consideration of those whom the late Judgment of Pestilence hath spared.

Quest. How shall I know whether my preservation from this Judgment be a special Mercy, or a fruit of Common Providence? Or whether it be not worse, a reservation unto evil?

Ans. You shall know three ways. First, By some things which go before such a preservation. Secondly, By some things which accompany it. Thirdly, By some things which follow it.

First,

First, Some things go before such Deliverances as these, when they are in Mercy; and they are such as these.

First, A sense of the danger that we are in, that so we may be taken off from all self-confidence, and fitted for the observing and honouring of Divine Goodness: Thus it was with *Paul*, 2 Cor. 1.9. *We had the sentence of death in our selves, that we should not trust in our selves, but in God which raiseth the dead.* He was as a dead man in his own apprehensions, and was taken off from all hopes and dependencies upon creatures, and had nothing to hold by, but this, *That God was able to raise the dead*: This sense of danger ushered in a great deliverance, and made way for the magnifying of the Mercy of God; and indeed when God intends to bless and sanctify any deliverance to a man, he prepares him by the sense of his danger, for

for a thankful reception of the Mercy.

Secondly, As there is commonly a sense of the danger, so there is also of our own unworthiness of that mercy which we desire, and of that which we enjoy already, and of our ill deserving in respect of the evil that we fear. Thus it was with *Jacob* when he was in danger of falling into his Brothers hands, *Gen. 32. 10, 11.* *I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my Brother.* A sense of our unworthiness of what we have already received of the Lord, is a great argument that God intends us more.

Thirdly, A Spirit of Prayer; to be earnest, and strive with God for the mercy. God seldom gives any thing

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thing to his people in mercy, but he sends a Spirit of Prayer to usher it in. When God would deliver *Jacob* from the hands of *Esau*, he pours out a mighty Spirit of Prayer, and he wrestled with God all the night, *Gen. 32. 24*. Now what was his wrestling? the Prophet *Hosea* expounds it, *Hos. 12. 4*. *He had power over the Angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication to him.* And what did *Jacob* pray for this night? he told us before, *Gen. 32. 11*. *Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my Brother, from the hand of Esau, for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the Mother with the Children.* *Jacob* saw that his whole Family lay at stake now, there was but a step betwixt them and death; therefore he bestirs himself, and will not give over till he gets the victory, and prevail with God; he will not leave praying till he carry away a persuasion that his prayers are answered.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, An humble Spirit, to submit to the hand of God under that affliction and danger which we pray to be delivered from. It is no contradiction to pray against an affliction, and yet submit to the will of God. A man may pray against the evil, and yet submit to the will of God; and this is very acceptable unto God, it is a fore-runner of deliverance from trouble already come, and may well be a sign of preservation from danger approaching, *Lev. 26. 41, 42. If their uncircumcised hearts shall be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember my Covenant with Israel.* This frame of Spirit was found in David, when that heavy affliction beset him, that his own Son rebelled against him, *2 Sam. 16. 11, 12. Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him. David stooped under God's hand in this affliction,*

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on, and this was an argument that God would deliver him out of that trouble, as we see he did.

Fifthly, Mourning for those evils which we see God is about to punish. When God finds us mourning for our own and other mens sins, whether he spare us or take us away in the judgment that is coming, either is in mercy. If he spare us, it is to see better days, and to enjoy better things; if he take us away, it is from the evil that is to come; but commonly God hath a care of such to preserve them from the evil, as we see he did the Mourners in *Jerusalem*, when a general judgment was come upon the City, *Ezek. 9. 4, 5, 6.*

Now it is our work to reflect upon our hearts, and consider, how we have found them under the apprehensions of this judgment of the Pestilence approaching; if we have found such impressions as these, we may

may conclude that our lives have been given us in mercy, and that they are the fruits of Gods special providence and goodness.

Secondly, You shall know by some things which did accompany this preservation. While this judgment from which you are preserved did hang over your heads, you had some such impressions as these upon your spirits.

First, A resolution to depend upon God, in the mid^t of trouble, untill the calamity be over-past. When God intends to give in a mercy of this kind, he commonly draws forth Faith to act for it, at least a Faith of dependance, though not a Faith of assurance; and though there may be many fears, yet these may serve to quicken and stir up Faith of adherence to depend upon God.

This is the meaning of entring in to thy chambers, *Isa.* 26. 20. Which doth not deny a prudent

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use of means to prevent evil and danger, but imply a trusting more to God to preserve us, then to the means we use. *Prov. 3. 5, 6. Trust to the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not to thine own understanding; in all thy ways acknowledg him, and he shall direct thy paths.* A man is not forbidden to use his own understanding, but to lean to it. There may be not only a care to prevent danger, but a fear of it; when we have used means, and yet a dependance upon God, a casting of our selves upon him for help, with a resolution to rely upon him, and particularly in this case of the Pestilence, preservation is promised only upon condition of a Faith of reliance and dependance upon God. As we may see in the connexion of the 1, 2, 3 verses, of the 91. *Psal. He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.* What is the meaning of this, but that

that he that makes God his refuge in danger, shall be safe under his protection; from this general proposition *David* takes up a particular resolution to depend upon God, *I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in him will I trust.* And from thence he infers for his own, the comfort of all that do thus. *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome Pestilence.*

The connexion of the 9. & 10. verses of this *Psalms*, are no less considerable than these. *Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most high, thy habitation there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall the Plague come nigh thy dwelling.* Where such a particular act of Faith goes before, preservation from the evil commonly follows; and this is always the fruit of special grace.

Secondly, Where preservation is

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in mercy, there is found an acceptance of life, and liberty, and peace; and what ever we enjoy in this as from the hand of God, taking all from him. Faith is a Grace that fetches all from God, and gives all to him; it hath to do with God in every thing, and looks over, and beyond every creature and means, to him; if Faith apprehend a danger, it takes its preservation from it, as well as its deliverance out of it, equally from God. This we see in *David, Psal. 18. 2. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer, my God, my strength, in whom I will trust, my buckler, and the horn of my Salvation, and my high tower. David* gives God all those titles which we give to those things from whence we expect or receive help; whatever men fly too, or depend upon in time of danger, that is God unto *David*; therefore he ascribes all the deliverance that he had from trouble

trouble, to the Lord alone; he takes his life as given him by the Lord. ver. 16. 17. *He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters, he delivered me from my strong enemy.* And as he acknowledges his preservation from danger, so he also confesses all the good that he enjoys to be peculiarly from the Lord. *Psal. 23. 5. Thou preparest a table for me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over:* Thus where God gives any thing in mercy, he gives a heart to acknowledg the mercy to be from him, and to eye God particularly in it.

Thirdly, A high esteem of the mercy that comes in such a way. The season and the conveyance of the mercy, do much advance the price of it. To live in dying times, to be safe when others are in danger, to be in peace when others are in trouble, is a mercy to be highly prized. To

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To have all these at such a time, is much; but to have them in answer to prayer, to have them through the Promise and Covenant of Grace, is a great deal more. To have these, not as the fruit of common providence, but of special grace and fatherly care, sets a great lustre upon the mercy, and makes it very precious in the esteem of the soul. We see: *David* was much affected with deliverance that the Lord gave him, *Psal. 116. Because it was in a time of great trouble and danger. v. 3. The sorrows of death compassed me. And because he saw the hand of God eminently in it, v. 6. The Lord preserveth the simple, I was brought low and he helped me.* He prized it the more because it came as an answer to his prayers. *v. 1. I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.* And chiefly, because through all this, he saw that God had a singular care of him, and a high

high esteem of his life; and not only of his, but of all those that fear him, ver. 15. *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his Saints.*

Fourthly, Then preservation from danger comes in special mercy to us, when the same impressions are found upon our spirits, which the affliction sanctified should have wrought upon us. When the keeping off of an Evil, doth work the same things, that this should have produced, if it had come, and had been sanctified to the soul, then the preservation from this, is in mercy to the soul. As for example, Art thou in health, when others are sick? Art thou free, when others are shut up? Hast thou life and strength, when others are upon beds of languishing? Then enquire, Dost thou find those workings of thy heart as are suitable to a gracious spirit upon a sick bed? Dost thou see the vanity of

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of the World, the shortness of time? Dost thou mourn for the loss of time, as they do who are going into Eternity? And art thou careful to call thy Evidences together? Dost thou see the preciousness of thy soul, the weight of Eternity, the excellency of Christ, and of an Interest in God, as if thou wert upon a Death-bed? Oh then thy preservation is a mercy to thee; for these should have been the gracious fruits of such a condition, if thou hadst been brought into it; for God hath done that good by keeping off the affliction, which he should have done thee by it, if it had fallen upon thee, and had been blest unto thee.

Fifthly, Then Preservation is in love, when it is accompanied with a singular love to God. Thou wilt find thy heart not only in love with God, but thou wilt call upon thy heart more and more to love God. This was *David's* care, to engage his heart

to God, because of that singular providence of his over him, *Psal.* 116. 1. He is also much affected with the goodness of God towards his people, he therefore stirs up others to love him in respect of his Providence, *Psal.* 31. 19, 20, 23. *Ob how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence, from the pride of men; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion, from the strife of tongues.* Hence he takes occasion, ver. 23. to call upon men to love God: *O love the Lord, all ye Saints, for the Lord preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.* It is but reasonable that when we see more of God's love in any Providence, it should engage us to put in more of our love into every duty. We should be full of affection and zeal for the

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Thirdly, We shall know whether this Preservation be in mercy, by those things which follow it.

First, If there be found in us a care to keep those impressions alive which were made upon our hearts in the time of danger and trouble, and our preservation under it. Many men have some sence of the Mercy and Goodness of God in time of great danger, and seem to be affected with their deliverance; but these are only made by some extraordinary Providence, these things do not abide upon their spirits; whereas a good man labours to keep all the impressions that are made upon his heart, either under affliction, or by any Mercy, fresh and lively, that so the frame of his heart may be bettered, and that he may get a sound and good constitution of soul.

Secondly, There will be found in us a great care to live up to the engagements of such a condition, as we see it was in *David*, *Psal.* 116. 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17. *Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.* What follows the sense of this Mercy? see in the following verses: *I will walk before the Lord in the Land of the living. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the Cup of Salvation, and call upon the Name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. I will offer thee the sacrifice of Thanksgiving, and will call upon the Name of the Lord.* Thus we see *David's* mercies had an influence upon his whole life, as his outward condition is better'd, so his whole life is better'd, made more holy, and conform to the will of God. He considered not only

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what engagements God had laid upon him by his deliverance ; but also what engagements he had upon himself : For there are duties which spring out of the Mercies which we have received, and there are duties which arise out of the promises which we have made to God, upon condition of deliverance; and a good man considers both these.

David had an eye to the former, when he said, *What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?* And he had respect to the latter, when he sayes, *I will pay my vows unto the Lord :* And God expects it at our hands, that we should call to mind the Promises that we make in time of trouble ; and the best of God's People have need to be minded of them ; for we are apter to make them, than to keep them : We may see this in *Jacob*, who was ready to make a vow in his affliction, *Gen. 28. 20, 21, 22. And Jacob vowed a*

vow, saying, If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my fathers house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be Gods house. But when God had given him not only food and raiment, but had multiplied him greatly, he must be called upon to make good this vow, Gen. 35. 1. And God said to Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make there an Altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy Brother. We should learn of the Mariners in Jonah, who made vows after they were delivered; Many will make them before, and forget them afterward; but a good man either makes them after deliverance, or makes good those that he made before. It is good

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good to take up our vows when our troubles are ceased, and to turn them into Resolutions, to confirm and strengthen them, as our Mercies are perfected. *Psal.* 23. 6. From the experience that *David* had of the Mercy and Goodness of God, he takes up a resolution to follow God as long as he lived; he determines to stick close to God in his prosperity, who stuck to him in his affliction.

Thirdly, There will be an enquiry after work and service for God, how he may be serviceable in his generation. He is not satisfied with general service neither, but is ready to enquire, Whether God hath any particular service for him to do in the World, unto which he hath preserved him. God had a peculiar Work to employ *Moses* in; therefore he wonderfully preserved him in that time of common Calamity, and brought

him up in *Pharoah's* Court. And when a man that understands God's wayes and ends, meets with singular preservations, he is ready to ask, What hath God to do for me in the World, that he thus preserves me, when many others are taken away? and he labours to find out that Work, if there be any such.

This is certain, that God doth nothing in vain; he still proposeth an end to himself, and his ends are the promoting his own glory and interest in the World: And doubtless his peculiar Works have peculiar Ends: And commonly, what God chiefly intends, that he sets upon our hearts to seek after, or to comply with when it is offered unto us; as we see in *Moses*, God had preserved him for the deliverance of his people out of *Egypt*: And see how it was upon his heart before ever the Lord appear-

ed to him, *Exod.* 2. 12. Nothing doth more bespeak our lives to be given us in Mercy, than when we value our Lives by our Work; when we can say with *Paul*, *To me to live is Christ*. I know nothing worth a living for, but Christ; I am resolved while I live, to labour for him, and to apply my self to that peculiar Work to which he hath appointed me, and for which he hath so often preserved me.

Fourthly, A holy confidence in God for time to come; a dependance on him, and resolution to trust in him in all the straits that we shall meet withall. Faith grows stronger by all the answers and rerurns of prayer: If God give in any thing as a mercy, by special preservation, it fortifies the soul against doubts and difficulties for time to come, and a man is able then to reason from experience, as *Paul* does,

2 Cor. 1. 9, 10. *We had the sentence of death in our selves, that we might not trust in our selves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will deliver.* By these and such like Experiences you shall be assured that your preservations are the fruit of Divine Love, and that there was more then a common Providence in your safety. You are the saved of the Lord, and happy upon this account. But if the workings of thy heart have been contrary to these, suspend thy joy, thou hast less cause than thou art aware of, to rejoyce in thy preservation from this wasting Judgment. It may be but a reservation for some greater evil. But you will say, Can there be a worse Evil than this? I tell thee, Yes; Perhaps God may reserve thee for some judgment that may take thee away when thou

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thou art less aware of it. Nay; if
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 and long suffering, and fill up the
 measure of thy sins: This will be
 a greater judgment then the Pestilence
 which thou hast escaped. The Apostle
 speaks to such an one as thou art,
Rom. 2. 4. Despisest thou the
 riches of his goodness and forbearance,
 and long suffering, not knowing that
 the goodness of God leadeth thee to
 repentance? Mark what is the issue
 of such a frame as this is. *ver. 3.* But
after thine hard and impenitent heart,
treasurest up wrath against the day
of wrath. It had been better for
 thee that thou hadst been taken a-
 way and sent to hell long ago, then
 thou shouldst live to treasure up
 more wrath, against that day of
 wrath, and to make thy eternal
 condition so much the more intolerable

lerable. Let me therefore perswade thee to look back again and again, how it hath been with thee under this dreadful visitation; and consider thy self, how hath it left thee? Did it find thee stupid and insensible of danger as many have been? or rimerous? if so, Whether did thy fears drive thee only to the Physitian, to their directions for thy security, and not unto God? And now the danger is something blown over, thou art left as vain, as unfruitful, yea as prophane as before; thou sayst in effect as they did, *Jer. 7. 10. We are delivered to do all these abominations.* If this be thy case, thou art amiserable man or woman; thou art none of those whom *Moses* magnifies in this place, whom he admires as a happy people. And if thou believest this to be a truth, stir up thy self to seek after an interest in this divine providence: Labour for a life suitable to a saved one; then shalt

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shalt thou indeed have cause to rejoyce in thy deliverance; for the good of providence is not seen by the visible effects of it, but is legible in the hearts and lives of the saved.

The Use that you should make of this truth, all you that are under these gracious impressions of providence, or sincerely labouring after them, should be,

First, Look upon your mercies as they are, be sure to acknowledg God in all that you have, and enjoy; give him the glory of his goodness and truth; take your lives out of his hand, and say, it is the Lord that hath saved me alive this day; *See up your Eben-Ezer, hitherto the Lord hath helped me*: Call nothing common that you have, though your lives and preservations may seem common mercies, because many have been preserved as well as you;

you ; yet, if you consider what hath been said, you will find cause to account your lives singular and special mercies, because there is more in them than there is in others ; you have been preserved by a gracious providence ; whereas others have escaped by a general providence ; you have been saved in mercy ; whereas others have been reserved in judgment. Nothing will conduce more to the quickning of your spirits, and to raise them up to live like your selves, than a true estimate of your mercies ; for this will make you sensible of your engagements ; and these considered, will quicken you to your duties.

Secondly, Love God. There is nothing more natural than this, that we shall love those who love us, and take the most care of us in our greatest dangers. This is that which *David* urges upon all the people of God, not onely to love him every one

one for the care that God hath of him, but every one to love him for the care that he hath of all the faithful. *Psal. 31. 23. Oh love ye the Lord, all ye his Saints, for the Lord preserveth the faithful.* And let it seem but a reasonable thing to you, to grant ~~that~~ God a peculiar interest in your hearts and lives, who have a special interest in his providence.

Thirdly, Be careful to pay your vows that you have made to the Lord in the time of danger. Consider as well the duties which spring out of your promises made to God, as those which arise out of his providence towards you, and make conscience of both. Time was, when you valued your lives and the lives of your relations at a great rate; you offered freely and largely for your selves and them when trouble was near; O do not undervalue them now; think that enjoyment

ment of them now, to be as much worth as ever you did esteem them; Seeing God has taken you at your word, and has given you what you desired, be sure you make your word good, and give him what you promised.

Fourthly ~~and lastly~~, Be of good courage, strengthen your selves in God, from the experience that you have had of his goodness and truth; and live in a constant dependance upon him, and hope in him for the time to come; that will be an evidence, that you believe this truth; and it will be an honouring of God's providence.

Nothing can be more rationally deduced from this truth, than a comfortable reliance upon God; It is the inference of the Holy Ghost from the Premises, *Psalm* 31. 24. When he had asserted the Providence of God over his people, in these Words (*The Lord*

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preserveth the Faithful) He exhorts or infers this, *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your hearts, all ye that hope in the Lord.*

Last of all, This truth speaks to every man after this manner. You see nothing can make a man happy which cannot render him safe, a great part of our happiness in this life lying in a freedom from evil, rather than in the enjoyment of good, which is the happiness of the life to come. And there is nothing so much contributes to our safety, as an interest in Divine providence: Can riches, honours, art, interest in men, say thus to thee, and make it good, *Psal. 91. 5. 6. Thou shalt not be afraid of the terror by night, nor for the arrow that flyeth by day, nor for the Pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that walketh at noon-day.*

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But God can speak thus to thy soul, and cause thee to walk without fear in the valley of the shadow of death.

Make hast then, and interest thy self in God, and improve this by Faith and prayer; it is the best preservative thou canst provide for thy self and Family. *Prov. 18. 10. The name of the Lord is a strong Tower, the righteous runneth into it, and is Safe. Nay here is shelter for Thine as well as Thee. Prov. 14. 26. In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence, and his Children shall have a place of Refuge. Would'st thou be good to thy self and to thy Family, make God thine, That thou mayest dwell in the secret of the Lord, and abide under the shadow of the Almighty. And time and experience will confirm thee in this truth, that they are safe whom God keeps, and happy whom he saves;* and

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and with David thou wilt conclude, Psal. 144. verse 15. Happy is that people that is in such a case ; Yea happy is that people whose God is the Lord.

FINIS.



